

Dead Boy Walking

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Dead Boy Walking by tvfordessert

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Summary:

After a particularly jarring encounter with Henry Bowers, Eddie Kaspbrak decides he should move on some harbored emotions before its too late.

(inspired by "Dead Girl Walking" from Heathers)

Dead Boy Walking

"You're fucking dead, faggot." Henry Bowers continued raining a storm of vitriol down upon a cowering Eddie Kaspbrak.

Unfortunately, Henry's unpleasant words weren't the only thing pounding against Eddie's skull. He was nearly unconscious by the time an impatient honking sounded through the woods returning a blurry vision to his eyes.

"Quit your yapping, bitch!" The insidious bully spat into the distance. "I said I was coming."

With that, the insistent blows came to a screeching halt though Eddie could sense the hostile presence still loomed closely over him.

"I finish this Monday, understand?"

As Henry's victim faintly nodded, he tasted displaced blood slosh around in his mouth.

"Good." Henry concluded before disappearing back toward the street.

No sooner than the unexpected torment had started, Eddie found himself alone amidst a small patch of trees off of one of Derry's main roads. He refused to move until he was one hundred percent certain the boy was truly gone and not conducting some clever ruse to prolong his torture.

Eventually, Eddie crawled weakly towards the closest tree where he finally sat up, resting his back against the uninviting bark.

Henry had a propensity for cornering his victims in secluded areas so that no one could hear their anguished cries. As the sun set over Derry, Eddie actually considered this factor a small mercy as the solitude allowed him to sob unabashedly into the evening air.

There was a small manor deep in his brain that housed his anxieties and Eddie could feel every door of that residence open wide and flood his psyche all at once. He fumbled for the inhaler resting in his pocket - a vain attempt to quite his unwelcome thoughts.

Whether rational or not, Eddie could not shake the feeling that Henry Bowers was in fact going to kill him.

And why not now? He was a month away from graduating and about three away from escaping Derry altogether. This seemed a fitting time for Henry Bowers to knock each one of Eddie's irrational fears firmly back into place.

That little voice in his head that told him he was foolish to believe he'd make it out of Derry alive had returned to lecture him on some of its finer points. After all, a premature demise seemed more aligned with his hometown's alarming statistics.

It seemed apropos that his ruin would take on the shape of Henry Bowers. The mullet-wearing prince of torture stood a cut above other bullies - he had mutilated kid's pets and driven multiple teachers into early retirements. Not to mention, he had even garnered "person of interest" status in more than one ongoing homicide investigation - at least if the rumors were to be believed.

Historically, Eddie had dismissed such gossip but found himself reevaluating as he tasted blood drying between his teeth.

It had been nearly a year since his last physical altercation with Derry's resident psychopath. In that time Eddie had turned eighteen, purchased his first car, taken the SATs (twice), and committed to a university far from the clutches of his hometown. Henry Bowers somehow managed to beat each of those milestones of maturity out of Eddie as if his fists were a time machine transporting him to a more helpless era.

Perhaps it was the unexpected nature of tonight's ambush that escalated these dread-filled musings.

Eddie had been walking home from a laid back Saturday evening spent at the Derry Public Library with his best friend Bill Denbrough.

Ever since Bill committed to a university himself he had developed an off-brand form of senioritis in which he spent nearly all his time writing short horror stories. Eddie and their friend Ben Hanscom would occasionally help him with proof-reading and work-shopping

respectively. Tonight had been set aside for editing work since Ben had family obligations.

Eddie departed the library at dusk upon completing his work with Bill. His friend had opted to stay and implement some of the technical changes suggested before leaving himself.

As usual, Eddie gained a strong sense of contentment from these sessions with his well-written friend. The calmness of this post-editing state left Eddie blissfully unaware that a threatening presence had been trailing behind him on his walk home.

By the time Eddie realized who was following him, it was already too late and he was being driven deep into the woods by Henry's fists.

Eddie partly wondered if he'd be a corpse already if Henry had come equipped with any of his traditional resources - goonies, weapons, no place to be. Fortunately, some poor soul actually seemed to need Bowers, pulling him away from his sworn duty to seal Eddie's fate.

When his tear ducts had ostensibly vacated, Eddie worked up the nerve to touch his face. Where he once wore distinct facial features, he now found only one unending pile of bruised, damp flesh.

Fear and shock took hold, freezing Eddie Kaspbrak for quite awhile. By the time he finally attempted vertical movement, the tree at his back felt as though it had become an appendage providing additional support that he'd have to amputate in order to move forward.

Eddie ventured unstably out of the wooded area, reaching the freshly darkened streets of Derry where he resumed his walk home almost as if nothing had happened - though his limping movement told a different story.

His brain had not stopped screaming since the attack. If he dared to close his eyes he'd be confronted with a new clip along an endless reel of creative ways in which Henry Bowers could kill him.

He found himself flinching away from the blows of imaginary bats in a scenario in which Henry and his equally shitty lackeys would string him up in their school's lobby and take turns at him like a piñata.

Eddie shuddered at this thought but, on the heels of it, realized something strange about the reality to which he was attempting to return his mind. A quick assessment of his surroundings brought Eddie to the conclusion that he had been wandering off in the wrong direction. He hadn't been walking home at all; in fact, this was the way to R- oh.

As he approached the familiar lane, he realized that his feet had unwittingly carried him to Richie Tozier's street.

For the first time in his life, Eddie Kaspbrak rolled his eyes at himself. Why was he like this?

Though his mind had finally become aware of his body's subconscious actions, Eddie couldn't seem to steer himself back in the proper direction. Instead he found his eyes drawn, like a moth, to a light spilling through a window high at the end of the street. He'd like to pretend he did not know why but the sensation that rattled his heart when a figure paced through the frame betrayed his true motivations.

Richie Tozier had always been a problem for Eddie. Since they were kids he relentlessly teased, reveled in his own crude humor, and got them in bottomless trouble. These became only minor grievances upon the semi-recent discovery of Richie's true threat - Eddie was in love with the idiot.

Bill Denbrough had been there the night Eddie realized that his heart had betrayed him and attached itself to Richie Tozier. Where Eddie found his own affections insanely ill-advised, Bill saw potential and offered soft encouragement. Perhaps Bill's sentiments in the library earlier were what had carried him to the end of Richie's block.

"Are y-y-you ever g-gonna tell him?" Bill analyzed the boy combing over his short story for punctuation errors.

"Maybe." This sentiment tasted doubtful on Eddie's tongue. "What's it matter to you anyway?"

"A-At this point? Are you kid-kidding me?!?" Bill smiled over at him, doubtlessly revisiting the role he played in consoling Eddie through this crush.

Having nothing more to say on the subject, Eddie pretended to return to his friend's story which was difficult when he could feel the author's eyes on him.

"What?" Eddie questioned.

"You tw-two need to do something ab-about it already."

"Like what?" Eddie resented the way that Bill always clumped them together with some sort of misplaced confidence that Richie returned his feelings.

"I th-think you know what I mean." Bill raised and insinuating eyebrow.

Eddie once again attempted to return to Bill's writing, though this time his face was rose tinted - because he knew what his friend meant.

"Do something about it." He whispered Bill's affirmation to himself. The words propelled him towards the boy that resided behind that window.

"You happy, Denbrough?" He huffed as he strode toward the house in spite of himself. "Now I'm talking to myself like a lunatic."

Speaking aloud to the chill, uncaring air of Derry felt like a decent warm-up for the probable humiliation that he was about to face.

Eddie came to a full stop in front of the Tozier residence, recalibrating his position in the cosmos in conjecture with the light from the window now directly above him.

Somehow, climbing the small tree in front of the house onto the roof presented itself as the only reasonable course of action.

He felt fairly agile as he finessed his way from the tree to the roof; he wondered if this was his body's way of taking back the reins from its

earlier incident.

Eddie glanced down from his perch and was relieved he had not thought to do so mid-climb because he may have never made it.

With a newfound awareness of height, Eddie slowly inched toward the window. Closing this gap somehow seemed to be the longest leg of his journey.

Upon reaching his destination, Eddie suspended his instinct to rap furiously at the glass and save himself from the discomfort of standing on uneven roofing. The cause of this suspension came from the image he found behind the window.

Eddie felt as though he were no longer on a roof at all, but an art museum where he found himself caught in the crosshairs of the most captivating still life.

The sill framed Richie Tozier indulging in the one habit that weakened Eddie most - the simple act of reading a book.

Richie couldn't crack a textbook to save his life but he was more well-read than any teacher Eddie had ever known. He had built an impressive library and had garnered a reputation for reading anything he could get his hands on. The only thing he cared more about than literature was music - though his indulgence in both habits surely stemmed from the same escapist tendency.

Reading was not something Richie discussed often or even bragged about, it was just something he did - dropping casual literary references into conversations as if there was nothing more to it. The Losers had likewise grown accustomed to the sight of Richie with a book in-hand and did not give it much of a passing thought; the only thing that still surprised them about this habit was how it managed to keep their loudmouth friend briefly subdued.

Eddie was the only among them still entranced by this seemingly contradictory, yet simultaneously fitting, habit of Richie's. The sight of the dark haired boy engrossed in a thick novel always sent an unnatural spike to Eddie's heart rate and tonight was no exception.

In the privacy of his room, Richie had managed to paint a scene that made the act even more intoxicating to observe than usual producing a voyeuristic guilt in the boy at his window. The orange light of his bedside lamp draped across his shirtless torso as he sat up analyzing the text in front of him with a slightly furrowed brow. Aside from his signature horn-rimmed glasses, Richie wore only plaid blue pajama pants. He ran his hand through a mess of ruffled hair before turning the page.

Eddie realized that even the gentlest of knocks would disrupt the picture-perfect image that laid inside, but he eventually broke free of Richie's mesmerizing visage long enough to motion his fist against the glass framework.

Richie's eyes snapped startled from the page and darted around the room before fully making the connection between the noise and the window. When he finally squinted toward the roof, he found the shadow of Eddie Kaspbrak waving faintly.

While the source of the disturbance had been clarified, Richie still seemed a bit disarmed as he made his way over to the window.

"Watch who you sneak up on, I could have been jerking it in -" Letting his visitor inside, Richie noticed his friend's fractured features. "Holy shit, Eds. What happened to your face?"

"Oh, yeah." Eddie plopped unceremoniously from the window onto Richie's floor, having temporarily forgotten the incident that drove him here in the first place.

He could tell by Richie's reaction, that his wounds must have maintained a look of freshness.

"I forgot -" Eddie started absent-mindedly as these injuries already felt a part of him.

"I'm gonna get you some ice." He motioned for his guest to stay still.

"It's okay, I -" Richie had already hurried out of the room before Eddie could get a word in edge wise.

"Good work, Eddie." He resumed the habit of talking to himself.

He suddenly felt extremely pathetic standing in Richie Tozier's bedroom. Had he honestly thought the best time to finally do something about these tightly guarded feelings would be when he looked like a human punching bag?

A faint breeze brushed his shoulder and Eddie glanced back at the open window - maybe he should just abandon this plan, pack his bags, and move away from utter embarrassment.

While planning his mental escape, Richie reemerged at the door cradling assorted medical supplies in his arms. Eddie spied some of first aid's greatest hits - band-aids, Neosporin, ibuprofen, and, what appeared to be, both hot *and* cold compresses, along with other provisions

"I wasn't really sure what you needed." Richie shot a silly smile, though his eyes maintained a look of unwavering concern.

"Richie, I swear I'm fine." Eddie protested as Richie cleared a pile of clothes off a nearby chair and guided his friend onto it.

"Really? Your face could've fooled me." Richie knelt below him, reaching up with a warm compress and lightly dabbing his facial wounds.

A reminder that his face was beaten, bruised, and thoroughly unattractive was not exactly what Eddie was fishing for and he almost wanted to dish out a sassy remark but bit his tongue when he saw the genuine distress cast upon Richie's face. He couldn't recall the last time he'd seen Richie Tozier, who often projected a false "no fucks given" attitude, look this sick with worry.

"Who did this?" Richie asked in the direction of his patient, though these assorted injuries were recognizable to the touch. "Henry Bowers?"

The boy just nodded as Richie continued to press down on his tender wounds. The urgency and persistence of Richie's contact was becoming quite overwhelming to the emotional festers that laid beneath the surface.

"I'm gonna kill that inbred bastard one of these days."

"I think he's gonna beat us to it." Eddie stated dryly.

"Here." Richie dipped into the supplies which he had sprawled out by his feet and produced a bottle of ibuprofen that was quaint by Eddie's standards.

He lifted up Eddie's hand and gently shook two pills loose allowing them to free fall into the boy's palm. Eddie found himself engrossed in the care and focus that went into this action, Richie's eyes never breaking away from the bottle.

Evidently, Richie even had the forethought to pour a small plastic cup of water which he presented upon sealing the lid back onto the pill bottle.

"I'm serious." Eddie explained after engaging in his routine habit of swallowing down pills. "He said he was going to kill me."

"Well, I've never considered Henry very goal-oriented but, I'll hand it to him, it does look like he came awful close." Richie re-examined the corporeal form before him.

"He's not finished."

"Terrorizing villagers? Of course not, it's the only thing he's good at." Richie posited. "But, he'll move on to someone else by tomorrow - probably me - the buck always passes."

"Monday." Eddie echoed omnisciently.

"What about it?" Richie didn't follow.

"He said he was gonna kill me on Monday."

"Really?" Richie doubted. "Henry Bowers doesn't strike me as the type to carry a day-planner."

Eddie's eyes just stared outward with a hopeless vacancy.

"Seriously, Eds." Richie reaffirmed. "I doubt that kid even shows up to

school on Monday."

Richie was right, Henry Bowers' attendance rate was fairly pathetic. But Eddie couldn't shake the feeling that something was different this time.

"I don't know, Richie." If Eddie didn't know any better, he would almost swear that the boy squatting beside him shuttered ever-so-slightly at the soft sound of his name. "Something felt...different. I wish you were there then you'd -"

"I wish I was there too!" Richie exclaimed, hypothetically placing himself at the scene of the crime. "I would've knocked the fucker's teeth in."

"I don't see who that'd help, you know you'd just end up on his hit list too." Eddie uttered, consigned to defeat.

"Better me than you." Richie sighed halfheartedly as he committed to sitting on the floor by Eddie's feet and leaning back.

"Thanks, by the way." Eddie said, overlooking that last comment and instead gesturing toward the medical buffet table Richie had thrown together by his feet.

"Anytime, Eds." Richie shrugged his bare shoulders casually. "Are you sure you don't need anything else? I think you left an inhaler here once -"

"Actually." Eddie decided to dip his toe into these uncharted waters. "Um...this is gonna sound stupid, but after Henry almost killed me all I could think about was you..?"

"Well, I'm honored to be associated with such a horrifying experience." Richie hadn't the slightest clue what he was dancing around. "Pray tell, what other events make you think of me? That time you got mono?"

"Okay, I think you and I both know I associate that with Stan's terrible soup."

The two then laughed under their breaths, remembering Stan Uris'

noble attempt at comfort with home-made matzo ball soup, an exchange which exemplified that Stan's unmatched friendship was nearly as strong as his extreme culinary deficiencies.

"But seriously," Richie's laughing slowed to a halt. "Do you care to elaborate on how this experience brought yours truly to mind?"

"Yeah, about that..." Eddie sheepishly placed a hand behind his wounded skull.

"Geez," Richie's confusion was reaching a boiling point. "Spit it out, Eds."

"Sorry, it's just kinda hard when you're looking at me like...*that*." It was Eddie's turn to be exasperated, gesticulating toward the boy on the floor.

"Like what?" Richie defended.

"You know, looking all..." He held back the word, but only for a second. "Sexy."

"Did you just call me sexy, Eds?" Richie snapped his neck up in disbelief. "You must really need my help with something. This about your crush on Denbrough, is it?"

"What?!?" Eddie practically choked on the air around him.

"Come on, Eds. You think I didn't know?" Richie remarked, almost bitterly. "You always give him those little looks, it's like you two have a some sort of secret code or some shit. Plus, you hang out together constantly. I bet you guys were working on his book or whatever tonight, weren't you?"

"They're short stories." Bill's editor corrected. "Wait, how did you know that?"

"You guys mentioned it in school or something, I don't know." He mildly justified from the carpet.

"You've got this all wrong, Richie." Eddie backtracked.

"Let me give it a shot." Richie *thought* he had pieced it together pretty well. "Henry almost kills you, heck you still think he *is* gonna kill you and- and you get, you know, all...emotional, start to think about all the things you didn't say, didn't do...with Bill."

"Wow, okay!" Eddie rarely held the upper-hand in terms of social awareness. "You want to know why Bill and I are so close? Do you want to know what we talk about all the time?"

"Not really." Though Eddie was the one who'd been beaten within an inch of his life, Richie appeared to be exposing a wound.

"You!" Eddie threw his words over Richie like cold water, wanting desperately to snap him out of this grave misunderstanding. "You. We talk about you, and how I -"

"How you what?" Richie had a newfound interest in the subject.

"How I love you, you fucking idiot!" Eddie finally let it explode out of him before following through with an apologetically softer read. "I love you."

"What? No, that's not possible." Richie processed out loud. "I mean, Bill - he's *clearly* not as good-looking as me but he's smart, and straight-laced, and excessively nice to everybody, and all that shit you like... that you deserve."

Richie paused, taking self-inventory and only finding more evidence to reject this hypothesis.

"Me?" He questioned aloud. "But I'm..."

"Clearly not very perceptive, for one." Eddie could not wrap his mind around Richie's far-off speculations.

"For one." Richie laughed out, allowing a minor degree of relief to wash over him.

"So what is this?" He glanced up towards the one who had just exposed his affections so blatantly. "You just wanted to crawl through my window, tell me you love me, and then go off and get yourself killed. I don't really see how that's fair to me -that's some Romeo and

Juliet bullshit."

"Well..." Eddie wasn't sure how transparent he wanted to be about the thoughts that truly swarmed his mind. "I may have had some *other* ideas too."

"Oh?" Richie cocked an eyebrow curiously.

"Let's just say, the regrets that came to mind were not only of the things I wanted to *say* to you." He bit his lower lip and averted his eyes surprised at his own confession.

"Eddie, I -" The boy who had been slouched casually on the floor beside his injured friend was now sitting upright and attentive.

But Eddie Kaspbrak could not stand it anymore; before the boy could speak Eddie leaned down and placed his lips gently over Richie's. In execution, this was less impassioned as he envisioned as his lips brushed against his friend's only slightly. If his faint "kiss" were a sound in would be a whimper.

The frailty of the gesture did not seem to matter to Richie Tozier. The second Eddie made contact, Richie bolted into him as if he were a race horse and the gun had finally been sounded. After what he would consider to be a failed moment of intimacy, Eddie attempted to retreat only to find Richie's hand cupping his chin and firmly pulling him back down.

Richie rectified their initial collision by giving Eddie the deep and arduous contact he was seeking. Their angle was a bit strange with Eddie remaining tentatively on the chair, though he was hesitant to sacrifice passion for comfort. After all, this moment was everything Eddie Kaspbrak had convinced himself he'd never be able to have - he was successfully kissing the boy he recklessly adored.

However, Eddie decided to make his way toward the floor as he felt his neck tensing from its continuous magnetic pull downward toward the pair of lips he kept crashing into.

"Nice of you to join me down here." Richie teased with a smirk.

"Shut up, Richie." Eddie said, realizing he was the only one of the

Losers who had discovered the key to making that request a reality as he returned to devouring Richie's face.

He slid his hands from their resting place on Richie's exposed neck to the back of his skull and ran his fingers through the boy's ruffled dark hair. He relished in the small imperfections found within - a knotted patch or slightly greasy strand reminded Eddie how much he loved *every* aspect Richie Tozier. He wore his flaws beautifully.

Eddie was becoming swept up in the act of making-out with Richie Tozier, so much so that he ended up riding the motion of their mouths downward until they were lying on the carpet among Richie's scattered belongings. Upon realizing the scene he'd created, Eddie broke away for a moment to stare longingly at his friend.

"Hey, Eds?" Richie blinked at him under mammoth glasses, seizing his own chance to confess.

"Yeah?" Eddie's voice broke under the emotional overload that Richie had set off by kissing him.

"I love you too." Eddie appeared almost confused by this statement. "Um, I realize that might be evident now, actions speak louder than words or whatever, but I just wanted you to know before we...I mean not that we have to do anything else..."

"I want to." Eddie leaned into him again, this time placing a hand on his bare chest as he kissed him. "I *really* want to."

"Good, me too." Richie allowed himself to break away for a moment.

The pair settled comfortably beside each other on Richie's floor where they resumed their new favorite hobby fervently.

Though Eddie was fairly certain that he could attain contentment kissing Richie Tozier forever, he didn't protest to finding the boy's hands at his hips. Richie pulled Eddie's body tightly against his own and in doing so sent chills down the asthmatic's spine.

This quivering sensation may have had its origins in Eddie's heart but he quickly felt it spread to other, more sensitive, organs and he tried to communicate this tonal shift in his kiss. As he deftly slid his

tongue into Richie's notorious trashmouth he swore he heard a steaming sound - a cartoonish manifestation of his inner desires.

"Eddie." Richie spoke groggily as if waking up from a dream.

He continued his exploration of Richie's mouth in lieu of an actual response as he took this utterance to be an affirmation of his actions.

"Eddie." Richie repeated, this time managing to break from the lustful trap the two had set for themselves. "Do you hear that?"

"What?" Eddie struggled to remember the sights or sounds of a world outside this room bathed in orange light and scatter-painted with books, records, and crumpled clothes that smelled of Richie.

"Chamomile tea." Richie laughed in spite of himself but Eddie had yet to catch on.

"The water." He nodded his head toward the door. "I put the kettle on when I went downstairs because I thought you might want some tea."

"Oh." Eddie finally focused in on the frequency of the whistling below them and blushed a bit at the realization that this was not an internal sound effect.

"I should - I should get that." Richie sat up, every minuscule movement illustrating his unwillingness to leave.

"Yeah." Eddie agreed and he watched the boy scramble clumsily towards the door.

Chamomile tea was a staple of Loser's Club sleepovers and gatherings. A rare non-medicinal form of self medication, Eddie usually kept a bag or two in his fanny pack or book bag. As expected, Richie teased him insistently for this vice often comparing him to an elderly man or menopausal woman to which Eddie would always defend: *"It relaxes me!"*

The same face that mocked this habit had now reemerged at the door holding out a mug accessorized with the familiar white string.

"I wasn't sure if you'd still want some." He pushed his glasses forward

with his free-hand and smiled goofily.

"Thank you," Eddie gazed upward from his seated position on the carpet. "But my mouth's got some other things on its mind at the moment."

"Yeah, I've noticed you've got quite the appetite, Eds." Richie carefully sat the mug down as he approached his next declaration nervously, beginning to pace.

"What's wrong?" Eddie noticed his hesitance.

"I - I don't think we should do this." His pacing simultaneously increased in speed and decreased in radius following this statement.

"Oh." Eddie attempted, in vain, to mask his disappointment; the words felt as though someone was harshly braking a speeding car.

Perhaps braking was the most advisable course. Were they rushing into everything at once to make up for lost time? Should they stay in their lane and take in the view first? Traditionally, Eddie would be the one to conjure such rationality but he had found himself shamelessly bingeing on Richie tonight.

"Don't look at me like that with those big brown eyes, Eds." Richie called the boy on the floor out for his inadvertent wounded-puppy stare. "You know I want to; *believe me* if you only knew how many times I've thought about this...But - I can't believe I'm saying this - I don't want to sleep with you if it's just because you think you're going to die."

"What if, after you live through Monday, you look back on tonight and regret..." Richie trailed off in an attempt to explain.

"I mean, I can't do that to you. As much as I'd like to take advantage of the situation." He eyed Eddie flirtatiously before tacking on a much softer sentiment. "I don't think my heart could handle it if - once you realized that this was a mistake."

"I don't think I'm going to die anymore." Eddie spoke off to the distance, understanding the truth behind this statement as the words

took shape in front of him.

"What about Henry? All that stuff you were saying earlier?" Richie was skeptical.

"That was my head - my anxiety." He confessed. "The second Bowers stopped hitting me all these thoughts came flooding in, I couldn't stop them."

"And you've just conveniently stopped them now?" Richie glanced down.

"No." Eddie found the concerned eyes that hid beneath his friend's glasses and locked onto them. "You did."

"Okay, remember a second ago when I said I wasn't gonna have sex with you?" Richie gestured behind him to dramatically overemphasize the short passing of time. "Did you really have to go and make that harder for me? I mean that just feels rude."

"Sorry." Eddie retorted semi-sarcastically, matching his flustered friend's demeanor. "It's just - I wanted to thank you, I guess. You scared those demons out of my head - calmed my mind down."

With that he rose from the floor and leaned against Richie's bed to settle himself. The two stood quietly across the room from each other, Richie's eyes probing considerably.

"I mean it." Eddie continued. "I'm not saying this so you'll change your mind about - I mean, we don't even have to..."

"No," Richie crossed the room. "We definitely do."

He careened his neck down slightly to reunite his lips with Eddie's, riding a wave of relief.

"Eds," He broke from a series of longing pecks, cupping his friend's soft cheeks in his rough hands. "Look at me and tell me you don't believe that you're going to die."

"I don't think I'm gonna die, Rich." The sincerity rang out in his eyes.

"Good." He returned to kissing his friend, but stopped once more to add: "You're not allowed to die on me, Eds."

Eddie answered by grabbing his spectacled friend's neck and pulling him back into a deep kiss. If dying meant giving this up, he'd fight tooth and claw to stave off that reaper.

His heightened emotions carried him away and he found himself pulling Richie so close that they took an uncoordinated topple onto the bed.

Richie chuckled a bit at their newfound position - Eddie wiggling underneath him in order to find a somewhat normal configuration on the mattress. Once his head was comfortably resting on the pillows at the top of the bed, Richie returned to the comforting embrace of Eddie's soft lips below him.

After a moment, Eddie found one of Richie's hands tugging and the hem of his polo shirt.

"Hey Eds, do you mind if I -" He didn't need to finish asking as he found Eddie nodding profusely.

"No gonna lie, Eds." He joked while shimmying the polo off his friend. "Kinda feel gypped that I don't get to seductively remove a fanny pack."

"Yeah, cause fanny packs are *so* sexy." Eddie rolled his eyes at the standard-issue taunting for his proclivity toward the convenient utility belt of-sorts, however the one who had thrown the jab was now attentively kissing his exposed neck so he found no further reason to complain.

"They are when you wear them, Eds." He felt the flirtatious grin press against his clavicle.

"You know, you've got me in your bed Richie, you don't need to keep flirting with me." Eddie protested insincerely, his hungry eyes highlighting the weakness he had always harbored for Richie's words.

Richie returned to his friend's eye level where he let a satisfied grin

spread across his face.

"Can't help it, Eds." He booped the reddened nose below him. "You're too cute."

Eddie allowed his eyes to travel around in that familiar exasperated loop once more while he grabbed Richie's neck and planted himself firmly back onto his mouth.

He kept one hand fastened on Richie's cheek while he kissed him but allowed the other to travel up and down his friend's bare back. This action produced soft sighs that revealed his intoxication with Richie's flesh and the intimate contact he'd longed to make with it.

"Hey, Richie." He followed up.

"Mhmm." Was all Richie managed as he was still preoccupied with putting his trashmouth to good use.

"You can do the pants too." Eddie invited with a hint of nervousness.

Richie must've sensed this because he immediately stopped the motion of his mouth and inspected his friend's features.

"Are you sure, Eds?"

"Yes." Eddie bit his lip and nodded with a renewed confidence.

Richie slyly straddled his legs around Eddie's waist so that his belt buckle lay directly below him. He then let his arms fall towards the cold metal fasten where he slowly and methodically unhooked it and slid it out of place all-the-while leaving his eyes on Eddie's burning cheeks.

"Okay, well, if I knew you were gonna be such a tease about it, I would have just done it myself." Eddie's eyes darted about as they tended to when he was flustered.

"Me? Tease?" Richie beamed proudly.

He discarded the belt and returned to the pants, mimicking an over-the-top slow motion gesture as he undid their last restraints.

"You know what -" Eddie started to reach for his own zipper in a frustrated effort, but he found himself taken aback by Richie's finger over his lips.

"Now, now, Eds." He spoke, freezing Eddie's efforts to escape this torment. "It's almost as if you don't trust my methods."

The issue Eddie took with Richie Tozier's flirtations weren't that he did not trust their effectiveness, rather that he hated just how well they appeared to be working on him.

"Whoa, is that a boner in your pants or are you just happy to see me, Eds?" Richie announced arriving at the same conclusion Eddie had about his seduction strategy, just in a far less ceremonious manner.

"Do you ever shut up, Richie?" He quipped as Trashmouth *finally* freed the pants from his body.

"Nope." He smiled. "And I imagine that's one of the countless things you love about me. Besides, you know, my-"

"Oh my god, please shut up." Eddie forced him back into a kiss before he could make some worthless dick joke.

Richie fell for the bait. As he dove back into Eddie's face, he cupped his cheeks intently lifting him upward and unknowingly allowing space for the boy below him to swiftly access his own briefs - removing this final garment for himself.

"Oh, no fair!" Richie exclaimed as if Eddie had just cheated in a board game.

"What? Did you really think I was gonna let you put me through *that* again?" He referred back to the unbearable teasing he'd endured mere seconds ago.

"Fine, fine." Richie conceded, eyes surveying the landscape beneath him. "Just let me soak it in for a second - Eddie Kaspbrak is naked in *my* bed. Take that, Denbrough."

"Again," Eddie thought the circumstance spoke for itself, but nonetheless found himself rectifying this miscommunication. "I never

liked Bill."

"Yeah, I know that *now*." Richie nodded towards his friend's exposed erection. "But he still won't stop fucking talking about - oh my god!"

Richie's face lit up because he'd just unknowingly stumbled upon a rather comical revelation.

"What?" Eddie was growing a bit impatient with the revisiting of this thought, though was admittedly curious.

"He was trying to be your wing man." Laughter hit Richie's ribs like a harsh wind to uneven scaffolding.

"What are you talking about?" Whatever notion that seemed to be thoroughly entertaining Richie eluded him.

"Bill. He-" Richie could not contain his amusement. "He would spend all this time with you and then come back talking to me about how great you were. I hated him *so much*."

"I mean, I love Bill." Richie clarified as his tears of laughter dried and he took on a more serious tone. "But I hated when he'd tell me things about you as if you were a stranger to me, as if I didn't already love all of those things about you."

"God, and I thought you liked him too. It was so awful." Richie remembered. "I'd want to scream at him and say: If you're just figuring out how wonderful Eddie is now, you're a fucking moron and you don't deserve him."

"Richie, I had no idea you felt -" Eddie's own anxieties prevented him from seeing a world where Richie could return his feelings, little did he know that Richie suffered from the same ailment of the heart.

"How could you know? I did a terrible job of communicating it." Richie regretted. "Just tell me we don't have Henry fucking Bowers to thank for this."

"No." Eddie used one hand to catch his friend's wrist in the middle of its gesturing motion and then moved his other hand to cup Richie's face and pull his eyes onto him. "No. Look at me. This isn't because of

him. This is us, okay?"

"Okay." He agreed to Eddie's terms before kissing him with a renewed intensity.

Eddie let out a gasp as he suddenly felt a hand lightly stroke his exposed cock.

"I'm sorry, I should have asked before I -" Richie fumbled.

"No, it's alright." Eddie felt a warm flush from all the fireworks exploding in his chest. "I just didn't expect it, that's all."

"But, it's okay if I -" His hand hovered.

"More than okay, Rich." He endorsed.

With Eddie's approval, the two feel back to their usual routine now with stifled moans dispersed throughout as Richie eagerly stroked his friend while they kissed.

"Hey, Richie?" Eddie briefly pulled away from his own pleasurable bubble to pose a question he honestly never thought he'd have to ask. "Do you wanna maybe lose the pajamas?"

"Oh shit, yeah." Richie realized the predicament and sought to rectify it with a smile.

Eddie practically choked when Richie removed his pajama pants revealing his own stiff erection.

"Got a problem, Eds?" He lifted his eyebrow.

"Yeah." Eddie spat out absurdly. "You weren't wearing anything under that, what is wrong with you?"

"Geez, Eds." He scoffed. "Didn't realize you were the pajama police."

"I just didn't expect your dick to suddenly be out."

"Want me to put it away? I have a spot in mind." He winked pinching the side of Eddie's ass.

"Be my guest." Eddie challenged. "Considering, you know, you have a condom."

"Anything for you, my prince." Richie affected an egregious British accent and curtsied toward Eddie before rolling to his side and sliding open the top drawer of his nightstand.

Eddie glanced over and noticed something familiar in the drawer, something that stood out among Richie's disorganized belongings.

"Are you sure you don't need anything else? I think you left an inhaler here once -"

Richie's words from earlier played back in his head once he processed that the object nestled between mismatched socks and the box of condoms for which Richie was reaching was in fact one of his many breathing apparatuses. He wanted to say something, but the words stuck like sap to his tongue. The subtle hints of Richie's affection had been around him all along, hadn't they?

"Okay, Eds." Richie turned back to face him only to immediately stick an unopened condom between their faces. "I will *only* put this on if you say the magic words."

"I told you Richie," He moved the boy's hand out of the way and stared at him intently. "I don't think I'm gonna die anymore, I swear."

"Good." He opened the packaging with his teeth and editorialized as he rolled the condom securely on. "The world would be real fucking dark without you in it, you know that, Eds?"

Eddie just grasped the boy's upright chin and pulled his head out from the clouds back towards him, because this side of Richie that waxed poetic and exuded sincerity just made his heart want to erupt. Eddie no longer believed Henry Bowers was going to do him in, though he was beginning to suspect Richie Tozier might.

"I have a request." Eddie stopped kissing him and nodded suggestively. "But you have to promise not to make this like the pants."

"Depends on the request." Richie did not intend to make promises he

couldn't keep.

"Fuck me?" Eddie threw the inquiry out for consideration while raising an eyebrow in a playfully seductive manner.

"I'm sorry, what was that Eddie?" Richie prompted with a grin spread so wide it could have been a mask. "I don't think I heard you."

"I *know* you heard me, Tozier." Eddie reprimanded.

"One more time couldn't hurt." He nudged. "You know, I think I'm getting hard of hearing, Eds. Pretty soon I'll need a hearing aid the go with these specks of mine."

"Please just fuck me already, you tease." Eddie whined.

"What? I still couldn't quite -"

"I swear to god Trashmouth, if you do not get your ass over here and -"

"Oh- *Fuck me!*" Richie overacted a phony realization. "That's what you said, isn't it? It's funny I could of swore I heard something else - but it was "fuck me", wasn't it? Yeah, definitely "fuck me.""

"I hope you know how much I hate you right now." Eddie said with a voice coated in undeniable affection.

"Do you now?" Richie rummaged back through the same drawer as before, this time procuring a jar of Vaseline. "So tell me Eds, do you ask all the boys you hate to take you so kindly, or am I special?"

"You're *special* that's for sure." Eddie punctuated the word sarcastically as he watched Richie fumble awkwardly with the container of makeshift lubricant.

"Okay." Richie verbally prepared himself, ignoring Eddie's last retort.

He climbed back to his previous position on top of Eddie, reaching downward and kissing him one last time.

"You ready?" He asked, bringing forth Eddie's favorite Richie

character yet - the attentive love-struck boyfriend.

"I've been ready, Richie." The statement echoed from a former version of Eddie, the one who had first fallen for Richie Tozier.

The young man with glasses intently broke from his friend's lips, letting his hands travel down his torso to his thighs. Once there he gently lifted them apart and nestled himself in between.

"I love you, Eddie." He said, taking in the sight of the one he adored splayed at a lustful angle beneath him.

Eddie would have responded in kind, however Richie slipped inside of him smoothly off the heels of that sentiment allowing only for a sharp inhale to escape his lips.

It took the pair a few beats to adjust to a comfortable position but, in only a handful of awkward shifts and adjustments, they found their groove and began to thrive under the glorious consecration of their deeply harbored desires.

"Ugh, Richie -" Eddie affirmed in a soft moan.

"You're beautiful, you know that, Eds?" Richie admired his sexual partner's capacity for temperate measured coos that made his grunts sound barbaric in comparison.

They did not have the capability to say much more than that as they both became preoccupied with the sensation set off when Richie's hand squeezed at Eddie's shaft once more.

"Richie -" Eddie Kaspbrak weakly managed. "I think I'm gonna-"

"Me too, Eds."

With an acknowledgement in place, Richie's thrusts became more deliberate as he cherished these last moments inside Eddie.

"Ugh...oh my god, Richie." Eddie exclaimed with a flushed release of energy, the warmth of which Richie felt against his hand.

Eddie's face contorted with pleasure in a manner so searing that

Richie had to close his eyes. Unfortunately, he could not escape the snapshot of Eddie's red cheeks and wide eyes even under the cover of his closed lids. Richie bit hard on his lower lip as he too finished spastically.

"Holy shit, Eds." His eyes reached the visage below him and, as he did so, Eddie reached a faint hand upwards pushing back a strain of Richie's hair.

"That face." He recounted as he delicately removed himself and rolled onto his back beside the boy who held his heart so tightly. "If I didn't know better, I'd say you were trying to kill me."

"No one here's allowed to die." Eddie said lovingly. "Those were your rules, remember?"

"And don't go trying to break them." He reminded Eddie as he sat up.

"Where do you think you're going?" Eddie wondered after him with a voice practically demanding post-coital intimacy.

"In case you haven't noticed, I've still got a little Eddie juice on me." He gestured the length of his body, but specifically focused on his hand which made Eddie blush as he momentarily forgot the deed he'd done into it mere moments ago.

"Not that I mind." Richie winked. "But I know how you are about germs."

A moment after Richie hobbled out of the room, Eddie heard running water in the distance but his mind felt so drowned in the sights and sounds of Richie Tozier as he looked around the room breathlessly - every object taking on a new light.

"There you are, my lord." Eddie felt something damp slap his bare skin, drawing him rudely back to reality.

Richie was at the door looking refreshed and wearing a pair of boxers that he must have snatched on his way out. He'd evidently fetched Eddie a washcloth but couldn't be bothered to walk it over to him, instead choosing to toss it, swoop up the now lukewarm tea from the table in front of him, and disappear back into the depths of his house.

"I'll be right back." Eddie heard echo from down the hall.

In the meantime, Eddie supposed it was logical that he clean-off and hunt for his underwear among the pile of discarded clothes on Richie's floor. This task raised some thought-provoking questions as to whether Richie owned a hamper and whether the "trash" moniker could be applied to more than just his vernacular. Eventually, Eddie managed to retrieve his own clothing from the pile.

"Aw, show's over, Eds?" Richie walked in just as Eddie finished sliding his briefs back on. He was holding the same mug as before, but with a fresh pile of steam spilling outward.

Eddie ignored this snide filtration, he was distracted by the dirt marks covering the pants he was about to re-adorn.

"A tumble in the woods with Bowers will do that." Richie noticed. "Want to borrow something?"

"Do you mind?" He peered over.

"Of course not." Richie put down the mug and moved towards his dresser, though Eddie would have assumed that particular piece of furniture to be decorative by the state of the boy's floor. "Anything for you, Eds."

"Thanks." He replied faintly, accepting one of what Eddie imagined to be a bottomless supply of plaid pajama pants Richie Tozier owned.

"Do - do you mind if I stay here?" He added.

"Shit, Eddie. Did you think I was gonna make you walk home or something?" Richie had already assumed he'd be staying the night.

"No?" The night had gone so far out of any ballpark Eddie envisioned that he did not really know what to think. "I mean, I don't know."

"Here." Richie handed the boy wearing his pajama pants a mug of reheated Chamomile tea.

After Eddie took the mug and nuzzled it close to him, Richie moved towards his bed where he propped his pillows up and re-assumed the

position Eddie first observed him reading in through the window.

"Don't be shy *now*, Eds." He motioned at the Eddie-sized patch of mattress he left next to him and it took the stunned tea-drinker a few beats to recognize this invitation.

Eddie finessed his way into the bed where Richie Tozier took him eagerly into his arms. Where Richie held Eddie close to his chest, Eddie held the warm mug the boy had made for him - they were Russian nesting dolls, cozy and content.

The two did not say anything at first, they did not need words. The energy Richie would usual expend speaking was being used to gently pet Eddie's hair while he sipped his tea comfortably.

"Hey, Richie?" Eddie finally felt compelled to speak.

"Yes?" The two craned their heads toward one another.

"You know I love you, right?"

"So you say." Richie pushed a larger swath of his hair back with Eddie now facing him. "Though I can't for the life of me figure out why."

"Well I just want you to know," Eddie led. "If I *ever* hear the phrase "Eddie-juice" again, you're never getting another piece of this as long as you live."